

High Risk Lead Occupations

What is lead?

Lead is a naturally occurring metal and is used widely in manufacturing because it is soft and resists corrosion. Lead dust and residue can be swallowed or breathed in, and large amounts can be stored in bones and teeth, which can be harmful.

Who is at risk?

Jobs involving exposure to lead dust or residues:

- Mining, smelting, or metal recycling
- Renovation and demolition (buildings built before 1970)
- Sanding, scraping, removing or welding on lead-painted surfaces
- Battery, electronics, or metal manufacturing
- Soldering, stained glass or radiator work
- Removal of old lead-lined telecommunication cables

What are the health risks of lead exposure?

- Headaches, fatigue, joint pain
- Anaemia (reduced ability of your blood to transport oxygen in the body)
- Raised blood pressure
- Kidney damage (more common in those with diabetes)
- Neurological issues such as problems with memory, concentration or co-ordination
- Lowered fertility in both men and women
- In severe cases: seizures or coma

Very high lead levels or untreated lead exposure can lead to permanent health effects.

Tips to reduce lead exposure and prevent bringing lead dust home

- Use exhaust ventilation and wet methods to reduce dust
- Wear protective clothing and a face respirator (Australian Standard 1716)
- Don't eat, drink or smoke while handling lead or in lead containing areas
- Wash hands, face, and scrub nails before eating or drinking
- Shower and change into clean clothes before going home
- Wash contaminated work clothes separately
- Clean workspaces, vehicles and home using wet methods or HEPA vacuums*

If you are unsure if your occupation involves working with lead or is not working safely with lead, contact Safework NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/contact-us>

**HEPA vacuums are equipped with a filtered designed to trap very small dust particles and allergens.*

South Western Sydney Local Health District
Public Health Unit
PO Box 38 Liverpool BC NSW 1871
Tel: 1300 066 055 Fax: 8778 0838
ABN 46 738 965 845
Website: www.swslhd.nsw.gov.au/populationhealth/